A STUDY OF THE WRITING INTERESTS OF A GROUP OF FOURTH GRADE CHILDREN

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by

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C. J. K.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It would be impossible to have a society without communication. This need for communication appears in infancy and grows as the child becomes a member of larger and more complex social units. The effective use of language is necessary to all social relationships and is an important factor in the development of the child's personality. It is through language that the child moves from a self-centered to a social being and develops the ability to participate in his group. A democracy depends upon its members to be able to interact and communicate freely with each other.[1] Without this exchange, there could not be a successful society.

Realizing the importance of communication, educators are changing the language arts program in our public schools at a rapid rate. Less emphasis is being placed on drills and "exercises" and more stress is on the usage of language in meaningful situations. "Language activities are more closely related to the everyday experiences of children,

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[1]William B. Ragan. Modern Elementary Curriculum. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1960, p. 193.

adapted to individual differences in abilities and interests of pupils, and integrated with other phases of the school program."[2] In fact, since language is used in every phase of the school program, Ragan[3] called it the "cement" that keeps the whole curriculum together. Instruction in the language arts once consisted of teaching the children the contents of basic texts in reading, spelling, and grammar. Today, there is a wealth of materials--supplemental texts, mimeographed materials, magazines, newspapers, workbooks, picture dictionaries, children's encyclopedias, and many more.

This change in materials is accompanied by a change in procedure. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening are not taught as separate subjects but are thought of as being interdependent. As a child grows in one area, he also progresses in another. This unification makes it possible for the teacher to adjust activities to a wide range of abilities and interests.

Regardless of a child's ability, he finds that language can give him satisfaction through self-expression.

> Imaginative expression is not a search for geniuses in the average classroom. . . . But it is a situation in which many children find pleasure by generating imaginative ideas and expressing them in the best form that they can command. . . . It

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[2] Ibid., p. 191.

[3] Ibid.

> may be valuable because of what it does for the composer rather than for what the composition does for the public.[4]

This point of view is endorsed by psychiatrists and psychologists both of whom insist that there be an outlet in the curriculum for children to express their basic needs. Witty also recognizes this important need by writing:

> Creative writing may be so conceived and developed that it will serve a three-fold function, enabling each child to record his significant experiences and to share his activities and interests, as well as to express himself freely, spontaneously, and joyously.[5]

From this quote, we can ask two basic questions: 1) What types of experiences do children write about when they are given time to do so? Do they write about personal, direct experiences or of derived, vicarious experiences?; and 2) Do they write according to their interests as Witty suggests? As for the first question, this has been answered in several conflicting ways. Clark[6] found that when 36 sixth graders were given 21 different writing situations and one hour per day for writing they responded best to

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[4]Wilmer K. Trauger. Language Arts in Elementary Schools. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1963, p. 249.

[5]Alvina Treut Burrows, Doris C. Jackson, and Dorothy O. Saunders. They All Want to Write. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., New York, 1964, pp. v-vi.

[6]G. R. Clark. "Writing Situations to Which Children Respond." Elementary English, 31 (March, 1954) 150-155.

highly personal situations. They wrote longer sentences and used more dependent clauses when their writing was based upon personal experiences. Likewise, in Language Arts for Today's Children, this view is expressed:

> Motivation is stronger when a child can express his own ideas and experience. The language is more colorful and vivid.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> He can put on paper only material that has become warmly familiar through first-hand experience or through being lived with in imagination.[7]

Littwin[8] concluded that first-hand experiences were more effective in developing imagination than were second-hand, vicarious experiences.

In direct contrast to these findings are those of Edmund. He feels that writing by fifth and seventh graders is of higher creative quality when based on derived experiences rather than when based upon direct experiences. However, at the ninth grade level, no difference between writing about personal or derived experiences was found. He explains this by saying that as the child grows older, he is more able to understand direct experiences and then has acquired more command of the English language. "It

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[7]National Council of Teachers of English. Language Arts for Today's Children, 1954. Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York, pp. 211, 215-216.

[8]M. F. Littwin. "Three Methods of Developing Imagination in Pupil Writing." English Journal, 24 (October, 1935) 654-61.

becomes easier to imitate or project themselves through the ideas, forms, and styles of writing they have read and enjoyed than to master language appropriate for expressing their day-to-day experiences."[9] Direct experiences may need a gestation period before becoming useful to the child in his creative writing.

Perhaps the best reference the present writer has found to bring these two opposing view points closer together is the following:

> It is a truism that one should write only about what one knows, the implication being that the highest quality of writing is based on direct or first-hand experiences. Whether or not this view is defensible for all age groups raises a question not yet resolved by research or practice.[10]

Do children write according to their expressed interests? This is the second basic question to be answered. When Edmund[11] studied the compositions of 63 fifth graders, he found that only 20.6% wrote stories on their topics of interest. He had determined their interests by asking them to make a list of what interested them most. One might ask

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[9]Neal R. Edmund. "A Study of the Relationship Between Prior Experience and the Quality of Creative Writing Done by Seventh Grade Pupils." Journal of Educational Research, 51 (March, 1958) 493.

[10]Neal R. Edmund. "Quality of Creative Writing Based on Direct Experiences." Clearing House, 33 (November, 1958) 163-164.

[11]Neal R. Edmund. "Do Fifth Grade Pupils Write Stories Based on Personal Interest?" Peabody Journal of Education, 36 (November, 1958) 151-153.

why only about one fourth of the group wrote on their expressed interests. Edmund felt that they had not yet been taught to write according to their topics of expressed interest, and that children are not always able to identify their interests. Yet he believed that the few who did write according to their expressed interests were more original in word choice and used a greater wealth of ideas than did those who did not write according to their listed interests.

More information on children's interests was obtained by Wyatt[12] when she distributed questionnaires to 2500 boys and girls in grades four through nine in six states. The questionnaires contained 32 topics, and the children were asked to check which three topics they would most like to write about. Wyatt had compiled this list of topics from various reading inventories that showed which topics children most like to read about.[13, 14, 15, 16] Among fifth and sixth graders, the boys strongly favored sports, weapons

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[12]Science Research Associates. Teacher's Handbook, Writing Skills Laboratory, 1965. Science Research Associates, Inc., Chicago, p. 22.

[13]George W. Norvell. What Boys and Girls Like to Read. Silver Burdett Company, Chicago, 1958, pp. 19-42.

[14]Phyllis Fenner. The Proof of the Pudding: What Children Read. The John Day Company, New York, 1957, p. 12.

[15]David H. Russell. Children Learn to Read. Ginn and Company, New York, 1961, pp. 377-385.

[16]Albert J. Harris. How to Increase Reading Ability. David McKay Company, Inc., New York, 1961, pp. 467-69.

and wars, exploring space, prehistoric animals, and science fiction. The girls indicated preferences for horses, famous and imaginary people, pets, medicine, and homemaking.

The present writer wondered whether fourth graders would express similar interests. Furthermore, would they write according to their interests expressed on an inventory? What do children write about when given an opportunity to do so? The writer chose sixteen different motivational procedures to serve as stimuli for weekly writing sessions. Examples of these procedures are: music; groups of words; titles; pictures; headlines from newspapers; and actual objects. At each session, a new topic was presented. These topics were the same as those listed in the inventory compiled by Wyatt, whose study is mentioned in the preceding paragraph. These topics were not assigned; the children were allowed to write on the topic presented or anything else they cared to write about.

The writer decided to administer interest inventories and collect the compositions of her fourth grade class. The results from these inventories and the stories actually written by the children could then be compared and analyzed in order to answer the following questions:

1. Do fourth grade children write according to their expressed interests?

2. Do they write on the topic presented or do they write according to their own desires?

3. How stable are interests expressed on the inventory and what sex differences exist in the number of topics chosen?

4. What sex differences exist in topics of expressed interest chosen during the school year?

5. What sex differences exist in the topics of stories actually written by the class?

6. Which of the stimuli most motivated the children to write?

7. What types of experiences do children write about?

8. How popular were the topics on the interest inventory?

9. How does the length of the stories vary over a period of time?

10. What changes in attitude toward writing were discernible during the school year?

In the next chapter, pertinent literature and research concerning the interests and compositions of children will be reviewed.

CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE AND RESEARCH

In this survey, literature was located by using The Educational Index and the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, and by checking sources listed in bibliographies. Books, journals, pamphlets, magazines, and unpublished theses were used in this research.

Since the purpose of this chapter is to inform the reader concerning the interests and compositions of children, it was necessary to select from the research available only those references that had pertinence to these specific areas of creative writing: Practical Versus Personal Writing; Assigned and Free-Choice Topics; Writing Interests of Children; Motivational Procedures; and Length of Compositions.

Practical Versus Personal Writing

Burrows[1] drew a sharp distinction between two types of writing: personal and practical. In the former, the child wrote for the pure joy he received in expressing himself. He wrote only to please himself. In practical

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[1]Alvina Burrows, Doris C. Jackson, and Dorothy O. Saunders. They All Want to Write. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., New York, 1964, pp. 2-4.

writing, the child learned and practiced the mechanics and correct form of writing in order that his readers may understand his message. Burrows insisted that the teacher should not tamper with the child's personal writing but should work for clarity, organization, correctness, and arrangement in practical writings, such as reports, bulletins, and business letters. These two forms of writing were not forever segregated, however. Burrows believed that after the child has learned mechanics in his practical writing sessions, he will transfer these learnings to personal writing situations. A similar viewpoint is expressed by Anderson.[2]

Filbin wrote:

> The creative writing experience should not be used as the basis for a lesson in grammar, punctuation, or spelling as it is so often used. This does not mean that children would not be given an understanding of writing form nor be lacking in the tools of language. These would be developed as a means of making the creative work more meaningful in its final form.[3]

Fluency in writing was the goal striven for by Redkey[4] in her classes of fourth through sixth graders. Mechanics were not emphasized in the daily five-minute writing sessions. She had separate, formal writing periods

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[2]Paul S. Anderson. "Language Skills in Elementary Education." Childhood Education, 26 (November, 1949) 101-05.

[3]Robert L. Filbin. "Teaching Creative Writing in the Elementary School." Elementary English, 40 (January, 1963) 44.

[4]Nancy Redkey. "Free Writing--For Fluency." Elementary School Journal, 64 (May, 1964) 430-433.

in which grammatical correctness, form, and organization would be taught and discussed.

Ullyette believed:

> It is desirable, if possible, to provide a regular time for writing each day. Part of the time can be allotted to learning the mechanical details of writing, but this should be distinctly separated from the creative writing time. Otherwise, the benefits of this "writing for pleasure" experience will then be greatly diminished.[5]

There are authors who do not hold to Burrows' distinction between personal and practical writing. Wolfe[6] pointed out that children should have many opportunities for writing on a variety of topics. He disagreed with the foregoing authors, however, in that he saw writing as an incidental opportunity for the teaching of spelling, punctuation, and penmanship.

Other authors, such as Arnold[7] believed that a discussion of writing standards (punctuation, paragraphing, capitalization, etc.) should precede any motivation or actual writing. Thus, she observed no distinction between personal and practical writing. Likewise, Claudel[8] used spelling

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[5]Jean M. Ullyette. Guidelines for Creative Writing. F. A. Owen Publishing Company, Dansville, New York, 1963, p. 6.

[6]Don M. Wolfe. Language Arts and Life Patterns Grades Two Through Eight. Odyssey Press, New York, 1961, p. 6.

[7]Myrtle Arnold. "Writing Is Fun." Elementary English, 40 (January, 1963) 81-84.

[8]Alice Moser Claudel. "A Modest Recipe to Motivate Creative Writing." Elementary English, 40 (January, 1963) 99-100.

words as a basis for some stories. Hence, the personal versus the practical types of writing are not differentiated between by all authors.

Assigned and Free-Choice Topics

After collecting stories from first and second graders, Minnick[9] found that more children based their compositions on pictures used as stimuli rather than upon some topic of their own free choice. Most of the non-stimuli stories (or those written from free choice) were composed from direct experiences. Moreover, she learned that students having an enriched language arts program (using the language experience approach) wrote more from free choice than did those children who had no enrichment.

In 1929, Soffell[10] analyzed the stories of 304 fourth through sixth grade children. They wrote five stories in a rotated manner. The first, third, and fifth story topics were assigned; the second and fourth topics were self-chosen. She used the Hillegas Scale to rate the stories on mechanics, organization, and literary quality. The scores on self-chosen topics proved to be better than those that were imposed upon the students. Furthermore,

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[9]Christine Black Minnick. "A Study of an Enriched Language Program as an Aid in Teaching Primary Grade Children to Write Original Compositions." Unpublished master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1965.

[10]C. Soffell. "A Comparison of Use of Imposed with Self-Chosen Subjects in Compositions of Elementary Children." Unpublished master's thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1929.

she found that children in the lower grades profited more from being allowed to choose their own topics than did older children.

Wolfe believed that the ideal theme topic for each elementary pupil is that preoccupation with which the child begins the day or sits down to write. The experience approach to writing was of utmost importance to this author. "The heart of the language arts program, then, is writing and speaking about those segments of experience which the child knows are most crucial in his day-by-day life."[11]

Creed felt that "All written communication, if it is to get its message across, depends on a sensitive and sharply perceptive oral discussion (guided, of course, by the teacher) accomplished in small groups of three or four, in order to stimulate and clarify ideas."[12] She did not condone the assignment of topics or titles in creative writing. In her experience, she found that "states of feeling serve as an excellent springboard" for topics.

Story titles and incidents as motivators are often limiting to young writers so Burrows[13] suggested that realistic or imaginary characters be presented as stimuli.

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[11]Wolfe. op. cit.

[12]Esther D. Creed. "What'll We Write About?" Elementary English, 33 (January, 1956) 26.

[13]Burrows. op. cit., p. 87.

She felt that topics should not be assigned, and that each child should have a choice concerning his writing. No completion dates should be set for his personal stories in order that each child may write to satisfy himself.

Aiming for fluency of expression, Redkey[14] had her fourth through sixth graders write daily for five minutes. The children were free to write whatever they wished and topics were not assigned until later when they felt more at ease in their writing.

Writing Interests of Children

Betzner[15] studied the content and form of original compositions dictated by children five to eight years old. She found recurring themes in their stories which suggested experiences that would be common to young children living in any environment. Examples of these are: "What My Dog Can Do," "What I Received For Christmas," and "How a Little Girl Plays with Her Doll." Other children and personal experiences were ranked as being the most popular centers of interest, whereas situations and inanimate objects proved to be the least popular topics. Animals and toys as main characters in stories were used more by five-year-olds than by any other age group. As the child matured, he utilized

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[14]Redkey. op. cit.

[15]Jean Betzner. Content and Form of Original Compositions Dictated by Children From Five to Eight Years of Age. Contributions to Education, No. 442, Teachers College of Columbia University, New York, 1930, p. 12.

people as central characters more frequently and used nature and animals less often. Betzner found that most compositions were narrative rather than descriptive, realistic rather than imaginative, and non-rhythmic.

In the Science Research Associates survey mentioned in Chapter I, Wyatt[16] found that fourth grade girls in Dearborn, Michigan expressed interest in writing about topics quite different than those that were popular among the boys. Girls preferred horses, pets, famous people, and homemaking. Boys chose sports, weapons and wars, exploring space, and prehistoric animals.

Many articles written on the interests of children pointed out that the teacher should discover each pupil's main interest and base her planning on her findings. These same authors usually did not provide the teacher with any evidence on what most children would like to and do write about.

Lighthall stated, "The teacher must realize that her role is merely to draw out or extract from the child ideas he already possesses in his inner self."[17] This implies, then, that the child will write on his personal

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[16]Science Research Associates. Teacher's Handbook, Writing Skills Laboratory, 1965. Science Research Associates, Inc., Chicago.

[17]Mary Lighthall. "Created by Children." Elementary English, 33 (October, 1956) 348-353.

or imaginative experiences, but it does not tell what the child's interests are!

Similarly, Parke[18] wrote that the teacher must utilize the pupils' common classroom experiences, and personal ones, too, in order to become an effective motivator and guide in writing sessions.

The Language Arts in the Elementary School by Strickland offered additional insight into the matter of what children write about. She stressed the fact that they not only portrayed their interests in their writing but also showed their deepest concerns.

> Classroom teachers interested in studying the imaginative expression of children frequently find a theme that is highly revealing repeated over and over in a child's writing. The timid child, in his story, is big and brave; the neglected child is protected and loved; the child who is hungry for possessions has them in quantity. . . . There is evidence, in the writing of many children, of the need for release and for compensation of reality as they find it.[19]

She found that often no matter which topic was presented to a child, he would write on a central theme, a theme that was all important to him.

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[18]Margaret B. Parke. "Composition in Primary Grades." Elementary English, 36 (February, 1959) 107-121.

[19]Ruth G. Strickland. The Language Arts in the Elementary School. D. C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1951, pp. 238-239.

Motivational Procedures

Applegate's[20] book Helping Children Write contained many ideas for teachers seeking an answer to the question, "How can I get my class to write?" She advised teachers to provide a special Writer's Corner for solitary writing. Within that area would be pictures with a caption, "What Story Does This Suggest to You?" She also recommended that an idea sheet consisting of questions like "How Do You Feel When --" be utilized to elicit students' feelings. A Yarn Spinner's Club which would meet to read and evaluate stories, a class story book, and human interest stories collected from newspapers were more of Applegate's ideas for helping students to write. She agreed with Burrows[21] that names for characters were good stimuli.

Trauger also suggested many procedures that could be used as "catalysts" for writing sessions. "Many of them have functioned . . . directly as topics for imaginative expression, and as catalytic agents to precipitate some other topic."[22] Among those he described were: a single word; a group of words; a sentence to begin or end a story; a newspaper headline or news item; names for characters; a

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[20]Mauree Applegate. Helping Children Write. Row, Peterson, and Company, White Plains, New York, 1954.

[21]Burrows. op. cit.

[22]Wilmer K. Trauger. Language Arts in Elementary Schools. McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1963, p. 259.

description of a place (setting); a proverb or slogan; a title; geographical names; and bulletin board items concerning news about authors and samples of other children's writing.

The usage of films to stimulate creative expression was advised by Witty. "Films motivate, engender interest, and provide a common background of experiences for all so that even the slowest child may respond in a satisfying way."[23] He recommended films which had musical score but no narration or dialogue in order that the child could interpret the film in his own words after viewing it.

Strickland listed five points necessary for a successful program of creative writing:

1. a relaxed, happy, wholesome teacher-child relationship and child-child relationships;
2. flexibility and freedom from pressures;
3. a wealth of experiences from real life;
4. experiences with literature suited to needs and interests of the children; and
5. an alert and interested teacher.[24]

She also suggested that teachers use stories, books, poems, vivid personal experiences, and music to motivate their class during writing sessions.

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[23]Paul Witty. "The Use of Films in Stimulating Creative Expression and in Identifying Talented Pupils." Elementary English, 33 (October, 1956) 340.

[24]Ruth G. Strickland. The Language Arts in the Elementary School. D. C. Heath and Company, Boston, 1951, pp. 239-40.

In an experiment involving 217 California children in grades four through six, the experimental group was motivated by books, records, toys, and pictures. The control group was stimulated mostly by story titles. Carlson[25] reported that the children in the former group wrote longer stories than did those of the control group. She attributed the longer length of the stories to the fluency and ease the children had in dealing with the topic. This implied, then, that books, records, toys, and pictures probably had a more stimulating effect than did story titles alone.

Records and music as motivational procedures were also suggested by another source.[26]

Some authors felt that children could be motivated to write following field trips. The excursion provided the needed background for common experiences, and the children could then express their feelings concerning the trip upon their return to the classroom.[27]

Oftedal[28] reported good results in children's stories after she had had them first record their ideas by

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[25]Ruth Kearney Carlson. "Recent Research in Originality." Elementary English, 40 (October, 1963) 583-89.

[26]New York City Board of Education. Developing Children's Power of Self-Expression Through Writing, 1952-53. Curriculum Bulletin No. 2.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Laura Oftedal. "Picture Writing." Elementary School Journal, 49 (September, 1948) 37-46.

sketching a series of pictures. These pictures could then be used as a guide in telling or writing their stories. Other authors have likewise recommended the use of pictures as a motivational procedure.[29, 30, 31]

Real objects were proposed by Anderson[32] as a stimulus for writing. A ballerina shoe, a doll, a pair of stilts, or any object with which children would have had experiences could be utilized.

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, Creed[33] felt that a guided discussion before writing was necessary in order to stimulate the pupils and to clarify their ideas. She did not believe that titles should be used as a motivator. To her, discussion was the essential stimulus.

Cross,[34] Carlson,[35] Ullyette,[36] and Strickland[37] all

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[29]Applegate. op. cit.

[30]Paul S. Anderson. "Language Skills in Elementary Education." Childhood Education, 26 (November, 1949) 101-105.

[31]Esther D. Creed. "What'll We Write About?" Elementary English, 33 (January, 1956) 24-28.

[32]Anderson. op. cit.

[33]Creed. op. cit.

[34]A. Cross. "Books and Children's Creative Expression." Elementary English, 35 (January, 1958) 38-41.

[35]Carlson. op. cit.

[36]Jean M. Ullyette. Guidelines for Creative Writing, F. A. Owen Publishing Company, Dansville, New York, 1963, p. 17.

[37]Strickland. op. cit.

believed that children could be motivated to write their own compositions after hearing a book or story read to them.

Tape recordings were suggested by Burrows.[38] They could be used to help children become motivated, as a record or picture could do, but tapes have the additional advantage of guiding the child in his writing. The child could record on tape a rough copy of his story; later, he could return to it and correct any parts he thought needed revising.

Guidelines for Creative Writing by Ullyette[39] urged teachers to use the following: sentences to begin or end a story; a single word; groups of words; and newspaper headlines. These same procedures were also recommended by Trauger[40] and Applegate.[41]

Length of Compositions

In 1933, La Brant[42] conducted a study of language development and analyzed themes written by children in grades four through twelve. Three Kansas schools and 482 pupils were involved in her project. The average length of themes written by children in grades four through nine

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[38]Alvina T. Burrows. "Composition--Newer Approaches." Grade Teacher 81 (April, 1964) 52.

[39]Ullyette. op. cit.

[40]Trauger. op. cit.

[41]Applegate. op. cit.

[42]Lou L. La Brant. "A Study of Certain Language Developments of Children in Grades Four to Twelve, Inclusive." Genetic Psychology Monographs, 14 (November, 1933) 415.

was 137.4 words. Girls wrote more words in given lengths of time than did boys of the same age group.

Clark[43] gathered the stories written by 36 sixth graders. Each child had written at least 21 compositions, yielding a total of 756 stories. Analysis revealed the average composition length to be 156.6 words. Clark stated that this figure for sixth graders is similar to the findings of Heider and Heider.[44] The latter authors found the average length of stories written by fourth graders to be 134 words.

Summary of Foregoing Research

The reader can correctly conclude from the foregoing survey of the literature that there are no set answers on many aspects involving creative writing. All authors did not observe Burrows[45] distinction between personal and practical writing. Opinion was also divided on the matter of how best to motivate children to write. Research was meager concerning the average length of compositions. All of the authors reviewed did agree that writing topics should be chosen by the child himself rather than be assigned by

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[43]Gwyn R. Clark. "How Well Do Sixth Graders Write?" Peabody Journal of Education, 32 (July, 1954) 33-42.

[44]F. K. Heider and G. M. Heider. "A Comparison of Sentence Structure of Deaf and Hearing Children." Psychology Monographs, 52, No. I (1940) 50.

[45]Burrows. op. cit.

the teacher. They stressed that the child should be free to write "according to his interests." However, much of the research did not say what the child's interests were nor did it say whether the child actually wrote according to his interests when given the opportunity. Edmund's[46] research reported in Chapter I was the most significant source available to help answer these questions. It is evident that more research is needed in this area of creative writing.

In the following chapter, a chronological account will be given of the procedure followed by this writer in attempting to answer the ten questions listed in Chapter I. These questions served as purposes and guidelines for this project.

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[46]Neal R. Edmund. "Do Fifth Grade Pupils Write Stories Based on Personal Interest?" Peabody Journal of Education, 36 (November, 1958) 151-153.

CHAPTER III

A CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT

Description of the Sample

After obtaining permission from the principal, the writer conducted this project in her fourth grade classroom at Linwood, Kansas, a rural community approximately 12 miles east of Lawrence. Most of the fathers of the class members were laborers and farmers. The average I.Q. of the 29 members of the class was 104. The range of I.Q.'s ran from a high of 115 down to 84. The Kuhlmann-Anderson Intelligence test and the Otis Quick-Scoring Intelligence test were administered to the class in order to determine the I.Q.'s. Nine years was the mean age of the group.

In order to avoid the halo effect, the writer did not inform the class that they were part of a project. They did not realize their stories were being analyzed until the end of the project, when it became necessary to inform them in order that their stories might be retained by this writer.

Establishment of Procedure

In this project, the writer administered an inventory in order to determine the expressed writing interests of her fourth-grade children. The teacher then introduced to her

completed their first interest inventory. After rating the choices on the points basis explained in the previous paragraph, this writer listed the topics in order of their popularity with the entire class. Nine topics were not selected by anyone in the room. They were: "Trucks and Machines;" "How to Make Things;" "Jobs People Do;" "Inventions and Discoveries;" "People in Other Lands;" "Homemaking;" "Transportation;" "Holidays;" and "Homelife." As the reader can see, these are mostly report-type topics.

The present writer then made another list, placing the most popular topic first ("Horses"), then taking the least popular topic next ("Real Animals"), et cetera. In this way, the most and least popular topics were arranged alternately. There were two necessary exceptions to this order. "Imaginary People" and "Romance" were not offered in the order according to rank order of points. The former topic was used the second whole day of school due to the teacher's reading of The Peculiar Miss Pickett.[1] The latter topic "Romance" was rated second in class popularity on the first inventory, and this author felt that due to certain circumstances to be discussed later, this was a distorted view of the class's interests. (See Table 1 for the points and results of the four inventories.)

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[1]Nancy R. Julian. The Peculiar Miss Pickett. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., New York, 1951.

Having established the procedural order for the topics, the writer planned which motivation or stimuli she would use with each topic. Some of the sixteen stimuli were used only once; others were used twice. These stimuli will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Each of the stimuli used to motivate the weekly writing sessions was advocated by authors whose works were surveyed in Chapter II. The following list is the procedural order of topics and stimuli used in the writing sessions:

1. Imaginary People	Following reading of book
2. Horses	Titles
3. Real Animals	Field trip
4. Famous People	Names of characters
5. Cowboys and Indians	Groups of words
6. Nature	Filmstrip
7. Pets	Groups of words
8. Explorers	Following reading of book
9. Fairies and Magicians	Titles
10. Family Problems	Sentences to begin story
11. Space Exploration	Newspaper headlines, items
12. Places in America	Description of place (setting)
13. Weapons and Wars	Music
14. Romance	Sentences to begin story
15. History	Names of characters
16. Prehistoric Animals	Pictures displayed
17. Medicine	Single word
18. Science Fiction	Sentences to end story
19. Sports	Actual objects
20. Manners and Growing Up	Proverbs, slogans
21. Exploring the Sea	Sentences to end story
22. Pioneers	Discussion following a unit
23. How to Make Things Homemaking Trucks, Machines People in Other Lands *	Actual topics listed on board
24. Homelife Transportation Inventions and Discoveries Holidays *	Actual topics listed on board

*Not chosen on September Inventory but offered at end of year.

Philosophy Observed During Project

This writer observed Burrows' distinction between personal and practical writing. During the creative writing sessions, no mention was made of mechanics, form, or grammar. These learnings were reserved for practical writing situations such as reports and letters, when the stress was on correctness in order that the reader might understand the writer's intent. The children's personal, imaginative expression was done solely for themselves. Of course, as the child gained confidence in his ability to express himself, he wished to share his stories orally or graphically with his classmates. Recopying and correctness were necessary only if someone other than the writer was going to read the composition. The children understood and accepted this; they saw it as a courtesy to their readers.

The weekly writing sessions usually occurred on Wednesday afternoons, and the children soon began to anticipate that day with eagerness. Thirty to forty minutes were usually allowed for the motivation and actual writing time. Stimuli such as single words, groups of words, or names of characters naturally took less time for presentation to the class than did motivations like music, filmstrips, or discussion following a unit. The average time for motivating the class to write was ten minutes. This allowed them to think through their ideas before they began to write. As the year progressed, the class requested and received

more writing time. Those children who had completed a story and wished to share it with the class were invited to do so. Shyer ones asked the teacher to read their story to the class for them. Twenty minutes were usually given to this sharing period. No negative comments on particular stories were allowed. Only good points were discussed. After they had written more, the children learned to discuss the characters, dialogue, action, verbs and adjectives, good beginnings and endings, et cetera, which were used in a story.

At no time was a child forced to write, nor was he told he must complete or hand-in a story he had started. There was no assignment of topics; the child was free to write on the topic of that day or upon anything else he cared to write about. If he chose not to write on a particular day, he was not penalized. He was free to work on other class projects, paint at the easel, or read.

At the first writing session, 15 chose to write whereas 14 did not. These latter were not "pressured," but they quickly saw that the 15 who did write had fun doing it. Furthermore, they were praised for their efforts and were given special attention by the teacher. At the second writing period, 25 students wrote stories and only two chose to do other activities. The future writing sessions usually had 90-100% participation. This writer is certain that the chief reason the interest in writing increased so quickly

was due to the observance of the distinction between personal and practical writing. When they saw that their efforts at writing would be praised and accepted, they felt free to write. Furthermore, help in the spelling of needed words was quickly given. The teacher usually wrote the words as they were requested on the board. Sometimes she wrote the word requested on a slip of paper and took it to the student.

The children had been taught cursive writing in the third grade. However, most of them still relied on manuscript because it allowed them to express themselves more quickly. There were others for whom even manuscript was too much of a chore. These students were asked to think about their story and when ready, to dictate it to the teacher. These dictations were re-read by them, and most were eventually shared with the entire class.

Materials Used in Project

Each child was asked to purchase a spiral-bound theme book in order that his stories could be kept together. Any unfinished stories and ones which the child did not care to share were contained therein. This notebook became special to the child, and he was proud to be considered an "author."

A separate, solitary place--the Writer's Corner--was provided early in the year. Any child could go there when he had completed his required assignment. A chair, desk, ink blotter pad, paper, pencils, eraser, and dictionary were

all provided in the corner for his use. Two or three pictures were usually posted above the desk. They had the caption, "Do these pictures give you an idea for a story? Then, let's write!" These pictures were changed frequently in order that interest in the corner would remain high.

Another popular idea proved to be a small "Word Box" which contained single words and phrases. If a child did not like the topic presented that day, he could go to the word box and draw out one of the slips of paper. Often these words served as effective stimuli.

A special box for completed stories was supplied at the front of the room. The children decided they would hand-in their stories when they had finished them rather than keep them in their spiral notebooks. This procedure also allowed the teacher to check quickly those who had written on that day, whether they had completed their stories or not, and to see any "extra" stories that had been written at home or during the other days of the school week.

After the children had finished their stories and shared them with the others, if they desired, the stories were filed in separate manilla folders. These folders were accessible to the children whenever they wished to re-read a story or evaluate their progress by comparing recent compositions to past ones.

After each child had about a dozen stories in his folder, he chose what he considered to be his best one. The

class decided that they would like to develop a class story book. This offered another opportunity to stress practical writing since other people would be reading the contents of the book. Much discussion was focused on paragraphs, capitalization, and punctuation. After each pupil had corrected his chosen story, the title "Fourth Grade Favorites" was given to the class story book. It was sent to the sixth grade room in exchange for some of their stories.

At the beginning of the project, this writer dittoed sheets with the names of her pupils in alphabetical order. Rectangular spaces beside the names were used by the teacher to record information about each child. If the child wrote on the topic offered that day, "Yes" was recorded; if he did not, "No" was written opposite his name. If the child chose not to write on that day, "Not Write" was entered beside his name. If the child did not complete a story, a blank was left beside his name. If the child wrote an imaginary story, an "I" was marked. "R" meant that his story had been realistic. In this way, the teacher could rapidly see the types of stories written by her class. Also, the popularity of a certain topic on the day it was offered was readily apparent. The teacher counted the "Yes" and "No" entries to determine the percentage of children writing on the topic the day it was offered. (See Table 3 for popularity of topics on the days they were presented.)

Another teacher-constructed item which proved to be useful in studying a particular child's writing and his interests as expressed on the four inventories was the record sheet kept on each child. The teacher recorded each topic chosen by the child on the inventories and marked whether or not the child had actually written on that topic when it was offered. This allowed the teacher to see whether a certain child actually wrote according to his expressed interests on that day. The stability of interests and the number of topics chosen during the year were also recorded. Space was provided on each sheet to record the topics of any extra stories written by the child.

Chronological Account of Writing Sessions

August 30, 1965, marked the first day of school and the first discussion on writing stories. The teacher read chapter one of The Peculiar Miss Pickett[2] and asked the class to listen for descriptive words (later defined as adjectives) and to try to picture the story's events in their own minds. At the end of the reading, the teacher asked the class whether they would like to write their own stories about Miss Pickett. Excitement grew, and plans were made to write the following day.

Tuesday was the first actual day of writing. The class listened attentively to chapter two of the same book,

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[2] Ibid.

and after its reading, time was given for those who cared to write about Miss Pickett, any other imaginary person, or anything they wanted to write about. They were told they did not have to write; it was not an assignment. Also, handing in their stories was not required. Other details, such as spelling and form which were part of the teacher's philosophy (discussed earlier in this chapter), were told to the class. At first they were bothered by what to put in their stories. They asked if they really could write on any topic. The freedom of choice--to be realistic or imaginary--seemed overwhelming to some pupils.

Five stories were completed and shared with the class. Others took their stories home to finish them. Only 52% of the class wrote during the first session; 53% of these stories were on the topic "Imaginary People." On the following day, more stories were completed, shared, and tape recorded. No negative comments were allowed.

On September 13, the class was again given the opportunity to write. At this session, they were simply asked to "write a story." No motivation or suggestion of topics were given. This time, everyone in the class participated.

On the following day, the interest inventory was administered for the first time. (As the reader will recall, it was the results of this inventory that determined the procedural order of the topics. "Horses" was the most popular

topic and was, therefore, the topic which was suggested during the following writing period.) The teacher read the directions and the choices to the class, explaining words such as "Prehistoric Animals" and "Pioneers" in order that the class would understand their meanings. When the instructor read the topic "Romance," a child asked, "What's that?" Before the teacher could reply, another student answered, "Yuh, know. All that lovey-dovey stuff!" This writer felt that these responses to the topic "Romance" accounted for its ranking as second most popular topic with both boys and girls. Because of the attention paid to this particular choice, the teacher did not place "Romance" in the proper position when she established the procedural order for the offering of topics. Other results of the inventory may be seen in Table 1.

Sharing of the stories usually occurred on the day following the writing session. This allowed the child to prepare his story so he could read it fluently. If the child did not care to read his story but wanted to share it with the class, the teacher read it for him. After several weeks of school, the story box was used in the room for the first time. It soon proved to be a popular idea.

On days when there were no planned writing sessions, the teacher provided time for audience reading by a pupil or herself. At other times, the class was led to discuss colorful phrases, descriptive words, surprise endings,

characterization, dialogue, action, et cetera. On one cloudy day the class had a particularly good discussion on how the clouds looked and how they made them feel. One boy had this explanation for thunder, lightning, and rain: "When it thunders, it's a giant running around in the sky. He turns on many lights, and then his scrub woman empties her buckets!"

After three weeks of discussing, writing, and sharing stories, several of the pupils asked the teacher whether she really liked their ghost and spook stories. Many of the writers were turning to gruesomeness in order to get the attention of the class. The teacher assured the class that there were some good points in the stories. Thus, the teacher remained uncommitted on the topics about which stories were to be written. Freedom to choose their topic was still their right. After a few more weeks, the children themselves became bored with the haunted-house type story and sought other topics.

The most popular topic on the first interest inventory, "Horses," was offered September 23. Story titles were used as the motivating device. These were written on the board:

My Pony
The First Time I Rode a Horse
The Wild Ride
Why I Would Like to Own a Horse
Any other horse story title
Anything else you want to write about

Individual attention was given to those who needed help in starting their stories. Words were spelled on the board when they were requested. Ninety-three per cent of the class participated in writing; 76% of those writing wrote on the topic of horses. Thirty minutes were allowed for writing time. Five stories which had been completed were shared orally with the class.

The next topic for writing was "Real Animals" with the motivation being a trip to the Kansas City Shrine circus. The following day, time was allowed to recall the animals the children had seen on the field trip. The teacher listed tigers, lions, camels, elephants, and dogs on the board as they were mentioned. Then she added, "Any other animal" and "anything else you care to write about." This again allowed for perfect freedom in the choice of topic. One hundred per cent of the class wrote stories, but only 32% of these stories dealt with the topic suggested.

The topic "Famous People" was offered October 7. The motivation, names for characters, was written on the board. The 15 choices were as follows:

George Washington
Abraham Lincoln
President Johnson
John F. Kennedy
Mickey Mantle
Sandy Koufax
Julie Andrews
Pope Paul VI
Leonard Bernstein
Queen Elizabeth
The Beatles

Dwight Eisenhower
Walt Disney
Any other famous person
Anything else you want to write about

At the end of the writing session, those stories which were completed were shared. The teacher drew the attention of the class to interesting beginnings and action in stories. Everyone in the class wrote during the session; 70% wrote on the topic.

Groups of words proved to be good stimuli when the class wrote on "Cowboys and Indians." The word groups were:

gunslinger	Colt-45	war dances
scalped	bows and arrows	papoose
tomahawk	massacre	wigwams
reward	moccasins	buffalo
	braves	spurs

Again, the children were assured that they could choose any topic for their stories. Individual attention was given to those desiring or needing it. Single writers were helped by suggestions similar to these: think what you want in your story; picture how your characters look and act; and decide what special words you want to use. This session was the first in which no children dictated their stories to the teacher. Every student wrote his own story and there was 100% participation, with 59% writing according to the topic. On the succeeding day, most stories were completed and shared. Many of the students became aware of omissions and the need for punctuation only when they read their story orally to the class. Guidance was given to those that saw the need for corrections or additions.

Several times during the year, the teacher allowed time for oral story-telling situations. The class responded eagerly to these periods. Often the instructor began a story and then let the class complete it. Mysteries and space stories ranked high in popularity during these oral sessions.

Late in October, the Writing Corner was established. Its use was granted to those who had finished their regular assignments. The children took turns going to the special corner when the entire class was involved in a writing activity. As mentioned earlier, the pictures were changed frequently in order that interest in the corner would remain high.

The filmstrip "Nature's Art" was the motivation for the topic "Nature." The last caption on the filmstrip was, "What beautiful thing did you see today?" The teacher enlarged this question to "What beautiful thing have you ever seen?" Trees, birds, flowers, waterfalls, and clouds were some of the items mentioned by the students before they began to write. Again, they were told that they could depart from the topic "Nature" and write on any other subject they were interested in. Stories written during this period were shared on the following two days. One student saw many run-ons in his story when he was sharing it, and the teacher encouraged others to look for them in their own compositions. The class had been studying about run-on sentences in their

practical writing periods. Hence, the class began to transfer their learnings from the practical sessions to their personal writing. This topic "Nature" allowed the teacher to discuss the setting of a story more thoroughly.

Early in November, the students chose from their folders what they considered to be their best writing. Each member was aided in correcting and recopying his composition in order that other students could easily read it. Paragraphing, punctuation, quotations, and capitalization were easily reviewed and taught in the following days because of the definite need for them. These corrected stories were then bound and collectively entitled "Fourth Grade Favorites." The class story book was then sent to the sixth graders for their reading pleasure. The teacher hoped that the sixth graders would exchange stories with her class but, unfortunately, their story book was never completed.

The fifth most popular topic on the first inventory was "Pets." The stimuli, groups of words, were written on the board:

Puppies
Kittens
Ponies
Guinea pigs
Rabbits
Any pet
Any other topic you care to write about

When the class saw the selections, they began telling the teacher about their own pets and the humorous things they had done. Others recalled a favorite pet they had had in the past.

On the following day, many stories were completed and shared. The teacher read a story to the children (written by a pupil unknown to the class) concerning one boy's feelings about his departed puppy. This led to a discussion on emotion-laden words, and several "extra" stories were later written using some of the ideas gained from the story.

The interest inventory was administered for the second time on November 15. There was no change in the procedure; however, at this date, no explanations were needed on the meanings of words. "Romance" aroused only the slightest snickering, and it dropped in popularity from 22 points down to six points. This low score did not place it in the top five choices of boys or girls. (The reader will recall that, as explained earlier in this chapter, a first choice was rated three points; second choice, two points; and third choice, one point.) The sheets were handed in without any discussion concerning them. Results from this inventory can be seen in Table 1.

The topic "Explorers" was motivated by the teacher's reading of a book about Leif Ericson. The chapter read ended with the following questions, intended to stimulate the thinking of the children and their eventual writing: "Were strange eyes watching them from the woods? Did this beautiful land belong to other men? Who were the men whose footprints he'd seen? Were they savages?" A high percentage (96%) of the students wrote, but only three chose to write on the topic.

Titles were used as the motivation for the topic "Fairies and Magicians." Those written on the board were: "My Magic Power," "If I Were a Fairy," and "If I Were a Magician." There was high interest in writing--100% participated but only 27% of them wrote on the selected topic for the day.

Early in December, the topic "Family Problems" was presented by using sentences to begin a story as the motivation. The following was read to the class, and they were asked to complete the story:

> Having had a lively time at their meeting, Sally, Bob, Roy, and Ann were getting ready to leave. As Sally was putting on her coat, she remarked, "Well, I hope that when I get home, things will be a little more settled. When I left, Mom and Dad were having an argument about some bills that needed to be paid." When Ann heard this, she was a bit relieved. She had wondered if her folks were odd or if all grown-ups had arguments sometimes. Ann thought that her main problem at home was that her father couldn't be home much of the time. They needed more money, now that Christmas was drawing near, so her dad was doing part-time work. This meant more responsibility was placed upon Ann and her brothers. All must do their share. However, once in a while, her brothers didn't do their work and this made Ann quite angry!
>
> While walking home, Bob told his friends that his main problem was his little brother. He felt that his parents treated his little brother better and let him have his way more often. Bob also wanted to be "out with his pals" and not have to take his brother along everywhere he went.
>
> When Bob finished talking about his problems, the group realized that Roy hadn't said anything about his family. Why wasn't he telling? Surely he had something on his mind. Can you finish this story, writing about Roy's family problems or your own?

The teacher had written the story, basing the problems mentioned in it upon previous class discussions about the students' problems. Some of the children were uncomfortable with the topic. Some of those who had real family problems denied having any and chose to write on another topic. Others took advantage of the opportunity to vent their opinions about their families.

The reader is asked to recall the teacher's philosophy as discussed earlier in this chapter. At each session, the children had freedom of choice in the selection of topics. As the writer discusses each topic, specific mention will not be made of the sharing periods which followed the completion of stories.

The topic "Exploring Space" coincided nicely with the actual space mission of Walter Schirra, Thomas Stafford, Frank Borman, and James Lovell, Jr. when the Gemini astronauts completed the first rendezvous in space. On the day following this historic feat, the teacher took space headlines and clippings from the Kansas City Star and the Lawrence Journal-World to her classroom. The newspaper items, which constituted the stimuli for writing, were discussed and pinned to a bulletin board for closer observation.

Following their Christmas vacation, the children were eager to write again. The next topic "Places in America" was motivated by a description of places or settings. The teacher read and distributed dittoed copies

of the following to each child:

PLACES IN AMERICA

1. Dodge City, Kansas--

Dusty, wagon-rutted streets, the Long Branch saloon, and Boot-Hill (the cowboy's cemetery) remind one of the days when this town was a capital for cowboys. Dodge City once was a meeting place for rustlers and cowboys who had finished their cattle drives. Street and saloon fights were not unusual.

2. Washington, D. C.--

This city is our national Capitol. The men who make our laws and President Johnson and his family are some of the famous important people who live there. Each year many tourists visit the beautiful white stone buildings with their gigantic columns and huge rooms. Many monuments have been built to honor our past Presidents, Lincoln, Jefferson, and Washington.

3. Grand Canyon--

One of America's greatest wonders is the Grand Canyon in Arizona. The canyon's steep walls which are so far apart, and its colorful rooky slopes give one a picture he is not likely to forget.

4. New York City--

Skyscrapers towering high into the sky, horns honking, taxi cabs and autos speeding, subways whizzing, and people pushing--these are some of the things that remind us that we're in the largest city in the U. S.--New York City. Times Square, the Empire State Building, and Manhattan Island are popular with the tourists--as is the World's Fair.

Few wrote on the topic (seven out of 25 students) but everyone wanted to express himself after a period of three weeks without writing.

In the next week's writing session music was used as the stimulus. The topic "Weapons and War" was motivated by playing a phonograph record of the "1812 Overture" by Tchaikovsky. The children were asked to take out their writing notebooks but asked not to write until they had listened to the record. They were told, "Just listen to the music and think what might be happening as the music plays." Later, they were asked, "What kind of story did the music tell? Did it have lots of action? Was it peaceful or calm?" Some of the reactions were: "Boy! That was World War III!" "It made me think of a rain storm and the calm after such a storm." "I saw Army boys saluting, reveille, shooting guns and cannons, and men riding horses." "I thought the quiet parts were like smooching parts of movies." "That was Jesse James fighting with bullets," and "I heard funeral and wedding bells." Only one student chose not to write during the period. Forty-four per cent of the stories were concerned with the "Weapons and War" theme, yet none of them were told the title of the record or the composer's intent. An interesting point was observed: even though many children wrote on other topics, they frequently had peaceful and stormy parts in their stories that coincided with the loud and soft parts of the music. (An example of this was a story about Gidget, a popular television and movie personality. The student had peaceful events in her story but a surprise birthday party with popping balloons soon

changed the atmosphere. This same student told the teacher that the music had given her the idea.)

On January 14, 1966, the interest inventory was administered for the third time. For results of this inventory, the reader may refer to Table 1.

One week later, the topic "Romance" was offered to the class through the use of sentences which might begin a story. The sentences, which were dittoed and distributed were:

> Saturday night was the big dance and Bob still hadn't asked Ann to go with him! She began to worry that he was interested in another girl. But then, she tried to put that thought out of her mind. After all, Bob had just told her on their last date that she was his "special" girl.

The class snickered at the idea of writing about romance and some comments were: "I'm not a teen-ager!" and "I don't know anything about that!" Nevertheless, 52% of the class did write on the topic. Three students chose not to participate in the writing activity.

Names of characters were the stimuli for the writing session when "History" was offered. The following names were written on the board at the beginning of the session, and a short discussion about each character was held:

Quantrill
Abraham Lincoln
George Washington
John F. Kennedy
Jesse James
Thomas Edison
Daniel Boone
Noah Webster
Robert Fulton
Francis Scott Key
Clara Barton
Benjamin Franklin
Leif Ericson

Many of these characters had been studied about earlier in the year through basal readers and the social studies text book.

A display of pictures was chosen by the teacher to be the motivation for the topic "Prehistoric Animals." In addition to loose photographs, pictures in supplementary science books and trade books were shown. The children were interested in the topic in so far as looking at pictures and discussing the animals was concerned, but they were either not enough involved or informed to want to write about prehistoric animals. Some students used the topic indirectly: one used the names of dinosaurs as names of human characters in her story. Another pupil used a prehistoric animal as a vehicle to transport his characters in a romantic story. Forty-five per cent of the class wrote on the topic presented.

"Medicine," a topic used in February, proved to be popular with the class. Single words were used as the motivation. Those words written on the board were: "Mumps;" "Measles;" "Doctors;" "Microscope;" "Sniffles;" "Aspirin;" and "Pepto-Bismol." Some of the children used the following as names for characters: "Tommy Toothache;" "Yellow Belly;" and "Sniffles." One hundred per cent of the class participated and 54% of them wrote on this topic.

To motivate the class on the topic "Science Fiction," the teacher passed out dittoed copies of the ending to a story. The children were told they could furnish the rest

of the story on that paper if they desired, or they could choose another topic. The sentences used were:

> All at once, the rocks on which the children were standing began to rise. They moved closer and closer to the surface of the earth. Daylight could be seen through the cracks in the ground. As they came out from the middle of the earth, many questions went through their minds. How had they magically been taken down to the center of the earth? Would grown-ups be able to believe the fascinating stories they had to tell? How could they describe and explain what they had heard, felt, and seen only a few hours ago? But now, the most important thing was that they were free again.

A high percentage of the class wrote but few (42%) concentrated on the science topic. Forty minutes were devoted to writing and 20 minutes were allowed for sharing the compositions.

On February 23, the class was surprised to find the teacher hauling some unusual articles from her closet. The topic "Sports" was motivated by actual objects. A baseball glove, a softball, a basketball, a football, and a tennis racket were tossed, swung, pounded, or bounced. Many were enthusiastic over this more active type of stimuli, and only two students chose not to write. More than half of the class wrote on the topic "Sports" yet it was unpopular on the previous three interest inventories.

"Manners and Growing Up" was the topic chosen by the teacher to be motivated by proverbs or slogans. A copy of the following was given to each child:

> What characters, actions, or situations do these slogans (proverbs) suggest to you?

1. Everyone's manners make his fortune.
2. Examples of bad manners last longer than of good manners.
3. Good manners and soft words have brought many a difficult thing to pass.
4. Manners make the man.
5. The manners of every age should be observed by you.
6. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

At the end of the period, the teacher noted that only the very first writing session had fewer writers than did this day. Furthermore, only three of the 16 who wrote stories chose to write on "Manners and Growing Up." The teacher felt that the motivation of proverbs and slogans was too advanced for her fourth grade pupils. Very few of them understood their meaning.

Sentences to end a story were again used as a motivation in March with the topic "Exploring the Sea." The teacher had ruled the paper and written the ending of the story. Dittoed copies were given to each student before the teacher read the ending:

> Now that they were safely back in the boat again, Tim and Becky began taking off their diving equipment. As Tim removed his face mask, he said to Becky, "I don't think I will ever forget what I saw down there!" Becky, who was busy taking off her flippers, nodded her head and replied, "Tim, we're awfully lucky we're back here. We had so many close escapes!"

The teacher guided a short discussion on what Becky and Tim might have seen under the sea. Treasures, buried cities,

monsters, mermaids, plants, and strange fish were some of the possibilities mentioned by the class. They decided that at this session they wanted the entire period for writing rather than using the usual 20 minutes allotted for sharing. This longer writing period allowed more writers to complete their stories unhurriedly. The following day their stories were read, and the variety of good beginnings was discussed. More than half of the class had chosen to write on the topic.

On March 14, 1966, the teacher administered the interest inventory for the fourth and final time. There were no deviations from the procedure used in the past. No discussion as to the use of these inventories was held. None of the topics necessitated explanations. (Refer to Table 1 for results.)

Approximately one week before the writing session on the topic "Pioneers," the teacher had begun a short unit on pioneers. The class had studied them in connection with a social studies unit in their text books. They had done map work on the routes of pioneers and had listened to two records, "Daniel Boone" and "To California by Covered Wagon." Food, clothing, transportation and dangers faced by the pioneers were ideas fresh in the students' minds. The motivation used was a discussion following a unit of study. Time for writing was given, but interest was at a low level. Seventy-four per cent of the class wrote but only ten per

cent of them wrote on the topic "Pioneers." Many students used the word box for story ideas on a different topic.

The reader will recall that not all of the topics were chosen on the September inventory. Hence, nine of them were omitted from the procedural order. This writer felt that at the end of the year, these topics should be re-evaluated for their popularity. Upon analysis, the writer found that "Jobs People Do" was not chosen by a single person during the entire year. The other eight topics had been selected at least once so the writer decided to offer these eight topics to her class. Four topics were presented at each of the next two writing sessions. They were listed on the board, without any further motivation:

"Trucks and Machines"
"How to Make Things"
"People in Other Lands"
"Homemaking"

At the next session, "Transportation," "Holidays," "Homelife," and "Inventions and Discoveries" were offered. As the writer suspected, interest in these eight topics was low. Only nine per cent wrote on the first four topics, but an all-time low was reached on the last four topics. No one wrote on any of the topics.

In the following chapter, data from the interest inventories and the stories actually written by the fourth grade children will be presented. Observations and comparisons will be made.

CHAPTER IV

DATA

As was proposed in Chapter I, the writer administered four interest inventories in order to determine the children's expressed writing interests. She then compared the results of these inventories to the compositions actually written by the fourth grade class in order to answer the following questions:

1. Do fourth grade children write according to their expressed interests?
2. Do they write on the topic presented or do they write according to their own desires?
3. How stable are interests expressed on the inventory and what sex differences exist in the number of topics chosen?
4. What sex differences exist in topics of expressed interest chosen during the year?
5. What sex differences exist in the topics of stories actually written by the class?
6. Which of the stimuli most motivated the children to write?
7. What types of experiences do children write about?
8. How popular were the topics on the interest inventory?
9. How does the length of the stories vary over a period of time?

10. What changes in attitude toward writing were discernible during the school year?

In this chapter, the writer will present data pertinent to these ten questions.

Do fourth grade children write according to their expressed interests? In order to try to answer this first question, the writer computed the total points from the four interest inventories. The reader is here reminded that a first choice was rated three points; second choice, two points; and third choice, one point. These totals showed "Horses," "Imaginary People," "Romance," and "Pets" to be among the most popular topics on the inventory. (See Table 1 for further results.) These totals indicated the children's expressed topics of interest. To discover whether the children actually wrote according to their expressed interests, the writer needed to analyze the writing samples collected throughout the year. Each story written during a weekly writing session was read and classified according to topics listed on the inventory. In addition, the writer read and classified the first three stories of each student which were written in the pupil's free time. Only three of these extra stories were counted in order that the results would not be distorted in favor of a prolific writer's interest.

Upon analysis of these compositions, the writer found that many stories did not fit into a definite category on the inventory. The reader will recall that "Mysteries"

TABLE 1

RANK ORDER OF POINT RESULTS OF THE FOUR INTEREST INVENTORIES*

Topic	Sept.	Nov.	Jan.	Mar.	Total Points
Horses	30	16	28	22	96
Imaginary People	19	15	13	17	64
Romance	25	6	4	15	50
Pets	12	12	15	6	45
Weapons and War	5	6	20	13	44
Magicians and Fairies	11	12	8	7	38
Science Fiction	6	11	8	12	37
Cowboys and Indians	15	10	6	3	34
Prehistoric Animals	8	6	11	5	30
Exploring Space	8	6	6	6	26
Manners and Growing Up	6	1	4	13	24
Family Problems	2	10	4	7	23
Nature	1	6	4	6	17
Pioneers	4	1	6	6	17
Exploring the Sea	4	2	4	4	14
Medicine	3	2	5	4	14
Famous People	1	6	2	4	13
People in Other Lands	0	3	5	5	13
Sports	3	3	0	6	12
Trucks and Machines	0	5	3	3	11
Homemaking	0	6	1	3	10
Holidays	0	3	3	2	8
History	3	1	2	0	6
Transportation	0	3	2	1	6
Places in America	3	3	0	0	6
Homelife	0	3	3	0	6
How to Make Things	0	2	0	2	4
Explorers	1	0	1	0	2
Real Animals	1	0	0	1	2
Inventions and Discoveries	0	0	0	1	1
Jobs People Do	0	0	0	0	0

*First choice on inventory rated 3 points
Second choice on inventory rated 2 points
Third choice on inventory rated 1 point

was not listed on the inventory; yet many of the stories fit into this category and no other. Another similar problem arose when the writer was attempting to classify the stories. Many of the samples collected dealt with imaginary adventures involving fictitious family members and-or school friends. These adventures were not inconceivable but had actually not happened. The writer judged ninety stories to be within this "Imaginary Family-School Adventures" type and sixty stories to fit within a "Mysteries" category. These two categories were not on the inventory administered to the class, yet most of the stories were best categorized as such. Forty-one stories were written on "Imaginary People," and the topic "Weapons and War" had 36 samples. The reader may refer to Table 2 for more details.

The writer analyzed the stories written by the children and compared these samples to the results from the four interest inventories. She felt that for the most part, the children in the project did write according to their expressed interests. Furthermore, topics that were unpopular on the inventories proved to be few in number in their writing samples.

The four topics "Holidays," "Real Animals," "Trucks and Machines," and "Sports" were more popular in the children's actual stories than they were in the interest inventories. For example, a total of 32 stories were written on the topic "Trucks and Machines" whereas it only

TABLE 2

RANK ORDER OF TOTAL STORIES WRITTEN AND TOTAL POINTS FROM INTEREST INVENTORIES

Topic of Actual Stories	No. of Stories	Topic from Inventory	Inventory Points
Imag. Family-School Advent.	90	Horses	96
Mysteries	60	Imaginary People	64
Imaginary People	41	Romance	50
Weapons and War	36	Pets	45
Holidays	34	Weapons and War	44
Cowboys and Indians	34	Magicians and Fairies	38
Real Animals	32	Science Fiction	37
Trucks and Machines	32	Cowboys and Indians	34
Pets	30	Prehistoric Animals	30
Horses	26	Exploring Space	26
Famous People	25	Manners and Growing Up	24
Romance	24	Family Problems	23
Exploring Space	22	Nature	17
Sports	21	Pioneers	17
Exploring the Sea	16	Exploring the Sea	14
Medicine	15	Medicine	14
Magicians and Fairies	13	Famous People	13
Science Fiction	11	People in Other Lands	13
Homelife	10	Sports	12
Prehistoric Animals	8	Trucks and Machines	11
Nature	8	Homemaking	10
History	7	Holidays	8
Places in America	7	History	6
Manners and Growing Up	4	Transportation	6
Explorers	3	Places in America	6
Pioneers	3	Homelife	6
People in Other Lands	2	How to Make Things	4
How to Make Things	0	Explorers	2
Jobs People Do	0	Real Animals	2
Inventions and Discoveries	0	Inventions and Discoveries	1
Homemaking	0	Jobs People Do	0
Transportation	0		

had a total of 11 points on the interest inventories.

As the reader can readily see from Table 2, some topics were more popular on the interest inventories than they were in the stories actually written. The following nine topics were not written about as much as one might have predicted they would have been, judging from the total points on the interest inventories:

"Horses"
"Romance"
"Magicians and Fairies"
"Science Fiction"
"Prehistoric Animals"
"Nature"
"Manners and Growing Up"
"Pioneers"
"People in Other Lands"

The remaining 18 topics were almost as popular in the stories written as they were in the interest inventories. In other words, the children wrote on these topics about as often as they had indicated they would on the interest inventories. Summarizing, 13 topics were written about either more or less often than one would have predicted, judging from the points on the interest inventories, and 18 topics were about as equally popular in the stories written as they were on the interest inventories. The writer interpreted this to mean that more often than not, the children did write according to their interests as expressed on the inventories. The writer should here mention an observation: Topics which they rated as being unpopular on the inventories were usually proven to be such in their actual stories. However, the topics that rated high on the inventories were not always equally popular in their compositions.

Do children write on the topic presented or do they write according to their own desires? This is the second question to be answered. The reader is here referred to Table 3 in order to see the popularity of the topics on the day the topic was offered. The most popular topic on the day it was presented to the class was "Horses." Seventy-six per cent of those writing stories on that particular day chose to write on the topic "Horses." "Famous People" was second in popularity, with 70%. As the reader can see from Table 3, only nine of the thirty topics had more than 50% of the class writing compositions based on the topic presented. These nine topics were:

"Horses"
"Famous People"
"Pets"
"Cowboys and Indians"
"Sports"
"Medicine"
"Imaginary People"
"Exploring the Sea"
"Romance"

Notice should be made of the low percentages of the last eight topics on Table 3. These topics were presented collectively on two separate occasions near the end of the year. (Reasons for this procedure were discussed in Chapter III.) Perhaps the reason these eight topics were so unpopular was that they are topics about which factual reports are often made. This report-type topic may have curbed the children's enthusiasm, with the result that they sought to write on topics of their own choice.

Rather than write on the topic suggested, the children chose to write on whatever topic currently

TABLE 3

POPULARITY OF TOPIC ON DAY
TOPIC WAS PRESENTED

Order in Which Topics Were Presented	% of Class That Wrote Stories	% of Those Writing That Wrote Stories Based on Topic
Imaginary People	52	53
Horses	93	76
Real Animals	100	32
Famous People	100	70
Cowboys and Indians	100	59
Nature	100	30
Pets	89	67
Explorers	96	11
Fairies and Magicians	100	27
Family Problems	93	38
Space Exploration	88	39
Places in America	100	28
Weapons and War	96	44
Romance	89	52
History	65	41
Prehistoric Animals	77	45
Medicine	100	54
Science Fiction	96	42
Sports	92	58
Manners and Growing Up	59	19
Exploring the Sea	88	52
Pioneers	74	10
How to Make Things Trucks and Machines Homemaking People in Other Lands	72*	9
Homelife Transportation Inventions and Discoveries Holidays	79*	0

*Indicates that these eight topics were presented collectively on two separate occasions.

interested them. Many writers obtained ideas for their stories from their peers, television, library books, or from experiences outside the classroom. At various times during the year, there were topics which were popular with a large proportion of the class. Early in the year, many stories were centered around ghosts and haunted houses. Later, there were trends toward writing about romance, hot rods, and wars. Christmas and other holidays prompted the class to write stories with seasonal themes.

In response to the second question, one may conclude that on most occasions, the children wrote on topics of their own choice rather than on the topics which were presented. As mentioned earlier, only nine of the 30 topics had more than 50% of the class writing compositions based on the topic presented. This meant that 21 topics had less than half of the class writing stories based on the topic presented during the writing session.

The third question involved the stability of interests expressed on the inventory. Four administrations of the inventory, every other month during the school year, allowed the writer to check the stability of the children's expressed interests. At each administration, the children chose three topics of interest to them. Therefore, if a child chose different topics at each administration, he would have chosen 12 topics during the year. Obviously, the interests would not be considered "stable."

The writer found that among the 13 boys in the class, three of them had chosen only four different topics throughout the year. Two boys had selected nine topics. The average number of topics chosen during the year by the boys was 6.46. Among the girls, one had selected only four topics whereas another girl had chosen ten. The average number of topics chosen during the year by the girls was 6.73. One can see that the interests remained relatively stable during the year, and there was no appreciable difference between the sexes concerning the stability of interests.

Table 4 was constructed in order that the reader could see the sex differences that existed in the topics of expressed interest, as shown by the points on the interest inventories. During the year, the boys did not choose any of the following topics: "Jobs People Do;" "People in Other Lands;" "Homemaking;" "Holidays;" and "Homelife." None of the girls chose: "Jobs People Do;" "Exploring Space;" "Trucks and Machines;" "Prehistoric Animals;" "Inventions and Discoveries;" "Explorers;" "Exploring the Sea;" and "Transportation." Unpopular with both sexes were the following topics:

"Real Animals"
"How to Make Things"
"Places in America"
"Sports"
"Famous People"
"Jobs People Do"
"Inventions and Discoveries"
"Explorers"
"History"
"Transportation"
"Holidays"
"Homelife"

Again, the reader's attention is called to these latter twelve topics. Each of them is a report-type topic.

TABLE 4

SEX DIFFERENCES WHICH EXISTED IN TOPICS OF EXPRESSED INTEREST AS SHOWN BY POINTS ON INTEREST INVENTORIES

Topic	Points		
	Boys	Girls	Total
Sports	6	6	12
Horses	31	65	96
Exploring Space	26	0	26
Weapons and War	41	3	44
Trucks and Machines	11	0	11
Real Animals	1	1	2
Pioneers	6	11	17
How to Make Things	1	3	4
Prehistoric Animals	30	0	30
Famous People	7	6	13
Jobs People Do	0	0	0
Imaginary People	10	54	64
Romance	18	32	50
Pets	16	29	45
Medicine	2	12	14
Inventions and Discoveries	1	0	1
Explorers	2	0	2
Family Problems	10	13	23
Magicians and Fairies	7	31	38
Exploring the Sea	14	0	14
People in Other Lands	0	13	13
Cowboys and Indians	22	12	34
History	1	5	6
Homemaking	0	10	10
Places in America	3	3	6
Science Fiction	29	8	37
Transportation	6	0	6
Holidays	0	8	8
Manners and Growing Up	12	12	24
Homelife	0	6	6
Nature	6	11	17

As for common interests, the boys and girls shared an expressed interest in "Horses," "Pets," "Romance," and "Cowboys and Indians."

Upon comparing the points scored on the inventories by boys and girls, the writer found several striking dissimilarities. "Imaginary People" and "Magicians and Fairies" were popular topics with the girls but very unpopular among the boys. Likewise, the most popular topic among the boys, "Weapons and War," was not favored by the girls. "Prehistoric Animals" and "Exploring Space," third and fifth choices respectively of the boys, were not even rated one point by the girls.

The top five choices on the inventory for the boys were: "Weapons and War;" "Horses;" "Prehistoric Animals;" "Science Fiction;" and "Exploring Space." Ranking in the top five choices for the girls were: "Horses;" "Imaginary People;" "Romance;" "Magicians and Fairies;" and "Pets."

After seeing the sex differences that existed in the topics of expressed interest, the writer was eager to find some answers to the fifth question. Would these sex differences exist only on the topic choices of the inventories or would the topics about which stories were written also reflect differences? Table 5 shows that sex differences did exist in the topics of the compositions written by the children. The five most popular composition topics among the boys were: "Trucks and Machines;" "Weapons and War;"

TABLE 5

SEX DIFFERENCES WHICH EXISTED IN ACTUAL STORIES WRITTEN

Topic of Story	No. Written By Boys	No. Written By Girls	Total No. Of Stories
Sports	11	10	21
Horses	12	14	26
Exploring Space	16	6	22
Weapons and War	31	5	36
Trucks and Machines	32	0	32
Real Animals	10	22	32
Pioneers	2	1	3
How to Make Things	0	0	0
Prehistoric Animals	5	3	8
Famous People	14	11	25
Jobs People Do	0	0	0
Imaginary People	14	27	41
Romance	5	19	24
Pets	7	23	30
Medicine	4	11	15
Inventions and Discoveries	0	0	0
Explorers	2	1	3
Family Problems	4	6	10
Magicians and Fairies	2	11	13
Exploring the Sea	10	6	16
People in Other Lands	1	1	2
Cowboys and Indians	23	11	34
History	3	4	7
Homemaking	0	0	0
Places in America	3	4	7
Science Fiction	7	4	11
Transportation	0	0	0
Holidays	8	26	34
Manners and Growing Up	0	4	4
Homelife	2	8	10
Nature	5	3	8
Imaginary Family-School Advent.*	27	63	90
Mysteries*	27	33	60
Totals	287	337	624

*These topics were not listed as such on the interest inventories.

"Imaginary Family-School Adventures;" "Mysteries;" and "Cowboys and Indians." The favorite five topics of the girls in their writing were the following: "Imaginary Family-School Adventures;" "Mysteries;" "Imaginary People;" "Holidays;" and "Pets."

About equal in popularity with both sexes were: "Mysteries;" "Imaginary Family-School Adventures;" "Horses;" "Sports;" and "Famous People." The following list of topics was unpopular with both boys and girls:

"Pioneers"
"How To Make Things"
"Prehistoric Animals"
"Jobs People Do"
"Inventions and Discoveries"
"Explorers"
"Family Problems"
"People in Other Lands"
"History"
"Homemaking"
"Places in America"
"Transportation"
"Manners and Growing Up"
"Nature"

"Real Animals," "Romance," "Pets," and "Holidays" were topics favored more by girls than by boys. Likewise, "Trucks and Machines," "Exploring Space," and "Weapons and War" were favorite writing topics among the boys.

Another sex difference in the actual stories written by the class is the fact that the girls wrote more stories than did the boys. (Again, the reader is reminded that the totals represent stories written during the regular writing sessions plus three extra stories per student. Most students had many more than three extra stories, but several writers did not have as many as three extras to be counted.)

The sixth question dealt with the effectiveness of the stimuli to motivate children. The writer found that she

could not assume that a certain stimulus was effective during a writing session just because many of the children chose to write. Perhaps another stimulus would have worked as well or better. Individuals may have been motivated more by some friend's idea or by the topic itself rather than by the stimulus per se. Therefore, the writer's opinion, rather than a factual representation, is here presented concerning this question. The children expressed a strong liking for music and records as a motivational device. They were quite enthusiastic during the playing and the discussing of the record. As can be seen in Table 3, 96% of the class wrote on the occasion that a record was used as the motivation for the topic "Weapons and War."

When filmstrips, field trips, and actual objects were used to motivate the class to write, interest in writing was quite high. The teacher found these stimuli focused the pupils' attention and aroused their curiosity, and the following writing sessions went smoothly. Less individual help was needed. The motivation had been strong enough to give them many varied ideas for writing.

The writer felt that when a single word was used as the stimulus for writing, the word had to be an unusual one which would catch the attention of the class. Furthermore, it needed to arouse the children's memories of past experiences. The writer felt that the word choice "Pepto-Bismol" was perhaps the main reason 100% of the class wrote

on the day that "Medicine" was the topic of the writing session. Words and phrases in the Word Box provided many children with ideas for writing when the topic suggested was unsuitable to them.

The class responded well to the stimuli of sentences used to begin or end stories. They delighted in receiving a ruled ditto with space provided for them to complete or start the story. Early in the week, knowing they would write usually on Wednesdays, the children would begin asking the teacher whether she would start or end the story for them. At the end of the year, the teacher had several discussions concerning their writing, and the class expressed a true liking for the stimuli mentioned above.

Pictures as a stimulus to writing were judged to be most effective when each child had a picture which he had chosen from the picture file or when the teacher was working with small groups. Pictures proved to be especially effective motivators at the Writing Corner.

Proverbs and slogans were not effective stimuli for fourth-grade writers. The children could not yet interpret their meanings. Only 19% of the class wrote on the topic when proverbs were used as a stimulus.

What types of experiences do children write about? This is the seventh question to be considered. The teacher recorded each story written during the regular writing sessions and classified the story "I" for imaginary or "R"

for realistic. Of the 25 or so stories written each week, only two or three stories were usually realistic. The others were imaginative. "Horses," "Pets," and "Family Problems" prompted the class to write about their own real, direct experiences more than the other topics did. The experiences written about were usually imaginary adventures involving the child's school friends and-or his family. The characters were real to him but the setting and plot were mostly fictitious. The names used in stories were often those of classmates. A child quickly pointed out, however, that the "Gary" in his story did not mean the Gary that was in the class. As was mentioned in connection with the fifth question, mysteries, ghost and haunted-house type stories were also very prevalent.

In their stories, the children lived in their own world. Other children their age or themselves--and not adults--were the principal characters, heroes, or heroines. The young writers could, in their stories, make the world as they wanted it to be.

The eighth question dealt with the popularity of topics on the interest inventory. This question has been partly answered in the discussion of questions two and four. Table 4 showed that only one topic, "Jobs People Do," was not chosen by any of the class members. Mention has already been made of the unpopular report-type topics. The reader can readily see the low scores of these report-type topics

in Table 2. The writer felt that "Mysteries" and "Imaginary Family-School Adventures" should be included on an inventory administered to fourth grade students. The reader will recall that the original inventory had been constructed for use not only for fourth grade but for grades four through nine. When administered to different age groups, minor additions and omissions should be made in the topics offered on the inventory. For example, fourteen-year-olds may need the topic "Drag Racing," and the topic "Magicians and Fairies" could probably be omitted. For the most part, however, the teacher felt that the inventory had been well-constructed, and its topics offered adequate choices to the fourth graders.

The length of the stories increased during the school year. The teacher counted the words of all the stories written by fifteen students during the weekly writing periods. (These fifteen pupils were the first fifteen in an alphabetical listing of the class members.) The writer found the average number of words per story for the first 12 writing sessions to be 139.5. In the next 13 writing sessions, the average was 192.0 words per story. Hence, the increase was 52.5 words. When the writer compared the length of the first three stories and the last three stories written by these fifteen students, she found they had increased the length of their stories by 63.8 words. Comparisons of the first five and last five stories showed the average increase to be 65.2 words.

The final question concerned the discernible changes in attitude toward writing. The teacher observed that as the children wrote more stories, they seemed to enjoy writing more. This is understandable, because they wrote to please themselves in their personal writing situations. They became more confident of their abilities. Furthermore, negativism was discouraged and they had the freedom to choose their own topics. As a result, less motivation and individual guidance were needed as the year progressed. The number of stories written by the students in their free time or at home increased. Pride in the growing number of stories in their folders was evident. Another observation was made in Chapter III concerning the requests of the class for longer writing sessions. The usual sharing period was postponed until another day, thereby allowing the class to devote more time to their stories.

In the next chapter, a summary of this project will be given and conclusions will be drawn. Limitations and recommendations for further research will be discussed.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Procedures

The chief purpose of this project was to determine what fourth grade children write about when given an opportunity to do so. The writer administered an interest inventory to her class four times during the school year in order to determine the children's expressed writing interests. She then introduced to her class the topics chosen on the inventory. Sixteen different motivational procedures served as stimuli for weekly writing sessions.

At each session, a new topic was presented. These topics were not assigned; the children were allowed to write on the topic presented or anything else they cared to write about. The writer collected these compositions and compared their stories with results from the interest inventories in order to answer the following ten questions:

1. Do fourth grade children write according to their expressed interests?
2. Do they write on the topic presented or do they write according to their own desires?
3. How stable are interests expressed on the inventory and what sex differences exist in the number of topics chosen?

4. What sex differences exist in topics of expressed interest chosen during the year?

5. What sex differences exist in the topics of stories actually written by the class?

6. Which of the stimuli most motivated the children to write?

7. What types of experiences do children write about?

8. How popular were the topics on the interest inventory?

9. How does the length of the stories vary over a period of time?

10. What changes in attitude toward writing were discernible during the school year?

Conclusions

Conclusions which may be drawn from the study are as follows:

1. The two most popular story topics were not included on the inventory administered to the group. In addition, not all of the most popular story topics among the boys and the girls were the most popular topics on the inventory. However, when one considers the inventory as a whole, one can conclude that, for the most part, the children in the study did write according to their interests as expressed on the inventories.

2. On most occasions, the children wrote on topics of their own choice rather than upon the topics presented during the writing sessions.

3. The interests expressed on the inventories remained relatively stable throughout the year, and there was no appreciable difference between the sexes concerning the stability of interests.

4. Definite sex differences existed in the topics of expressed interest. Boys favored "Weapons and War," "Horses," "Prehistoric Animals," "Science Fiction," and "Exploring Space."

Girls chose "Horses," "Imaginary People," "Romance," "Magicians and Fairies," and "Pets" as their top five choices on the inventory.

5. Sex differences existed in the topics of stories written by the class. The five most popular composition topics among the boys were: "Trucks and Machines;" "Weapons and War;" "Imaginary Family-School Adventures;" "Mysteries;" and "Cowboys and Indians." The favorite five topics of the girls in their writing were: "Imaginary Family-School Adventures;" "Mysteries;" "Imaginary People;" "Holidays;" and "Pets."

6. The most popular motivational procedures among the children were: music and records; sentences used to begin or end stories; actual objects; filmstrips; field trips; and unusual single words.

7. The children in the project wrote about imaginary experiences. Only a few stories each week were about real, direct experiences.

8. Report-type topics on the inventory were unpopular with the children. With the addition of the categories "Mysteries" and "Imaginary Family-School Adventures" the writer judged the inventory as offering adequate selection of topics for fourth graders.

9. The length of the stories increased during the year by an average of at least 52 words.

10. As the children wrote more stories, they enjoyed writing more. They requested longer writing sessions in order to devote more time to their stories.

Limitations

A limitation of this project was the writer's judgment which entered into the classification of stories. Perhaps another teacher would have classified a certain story in another way. For example, when the writer classified the stories, she interpreted the inventory topic "Homelife" to

include stories that were realistic and involved the child's true family. If these conditions were not met, then the story was classified under the topic "Imaginary Family-School Adventures." A similar problem involved the classification of stories under the topic "Real Animals." The writer broadened this topic to include stories about talking animals. The topic "Trucks and Machines" was interpreted to include car racing and airplanes.

The writer's judgment also entered into questions six and ten. The writer has no numerical facts to support her opinion. She judged the effectiveness of the stimuli and the attitudinal changes toward writing only by observation.

Observations and Recommendations

It is the writer's observation that this project aided the children in numerous ways. The weekly writing sessions afforded them opportunities to write freely and express themselves. The wide choice of topics and various stimuli allowed the children to experiment with different types of stories. The choice of their own topics and the freedom to write or participate in other activities gave them more privileges and freedom than did other curricular areas. Another advantage of the writing sessions was that each child's story was considered to be important and special. This attitude hopefully strengthened their self-confidence. Individual differences in interests and

abilities were provided for in the non-competitive atmosphere of personal writing.

Furthermore, the writer felt that as the child progressed in writing, his skills in reading, speaking, and listening also advanced. These four areas were always considered to be interdependent.

Finally, the program allowed the child to gain satisfaction through self-expression. If the child chose to share his story, then he also had the pleasure of entertaining others.

As was stated above, the children began to anticipate the writing sessions with eagerness. Several pupils told the teacher at the end of the year that they hoped to become "authors of real books" someday.

If this research were to be repeated, the writer would recommend that the topics "Mysteries" and "Imaginary Family-School Adventures" be included on the interest inventory. Omissions of or additions to the topics would probably be necessary if the inventory were to be given to different age groups. This change would allow the researcher to compare more easily the topics of the stories with the topics of expressed interest.

In future research, the ideal situation would be to minimize the judgment of one person. Rather than having only one individual classify the stories, several other interested adults could be asked to classify the stories

according to the topics on the interest inventory. The final result is still a judgment, but perhaps it would be a sounder one.

The writer recommends that classroom teachers always give the children an opportunity to choose their own topics in personal writing situations. Assigned topics may sometimes be necessary in practical writing situations, but the writer feels that topics should not be assigned in a language arts program which is striving for imaginative expression. This project showed that very few children chose to write on the topics suggested at the time they were presented. They preferred to write on topics of their own choice. Furthermore, any report-type topics were very unpopular with the children. They did not lead the children to self-expression.

Another recommendation to teachers, based on the findings of this study, is that sex differences are to be expected in both interests and stories actually written. Therefore, teachers should provide activities and reading-writing topics suitable to both boys and girls.

The writer recommends that teachers stimulate their pupils by using a wide variety of motivational procedures. Story titles may motivate some children but teachers should be alert to the possibilities of other stimuli. By using different approaches, teachers could more easily lead the children to the joys of creative writing.

Teachers of fourth grade students can expect them to write mostly about imaginary rather than real, direct experiences. This project bore out Edmund's[1] hypothesis concerning a needed gestation period for direct experiences. As was quoted in Chapter I, more research is needed in order to understand the relationship of direct experiences to various age groups.[2]

An important recommendation to teachers is that they provide their class with many opportunities to write. As the children progress in their skills, the rewards are numerous for both the writers and their teachers. All gain in personal satisfaction.

The final recommendation this writer wishes to make is that teachers maintain their enthusiasm in motivating and guiding their students to write. Enthusiasm is contagious. If teachers do not seem eager to help their students write or do not accept their early efforts at writing, then the writing program will lose its effectiveness and its merits. The success of a creative, imaginative writing program depends upon the energy, vitality, and sincerity of the teachers instituting such a program.

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[1]Neal R. Edmund. "A Study of the Relationship Between Prior Experience and the Quality of Creative Writing Done by Seventh Grade Pupils." Journal of Educational Research, 51 (March, 1958) 493.

[2]Neal R. Edmund. "Quality of Creative Writing Based on Direct Experiences." Clearing House, 33 (November, 1958) 163-164.

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APPENDIX

NAME _____ DATE _____

If you were asked to write stories about three of the topics below, which three would you most like to write about? Write the number one in the blank beside your first choice, two beside your second choice, and three beside your third choice.

_____Sports

_____Horses

_____Exploring Space

_____Weapons and War

_____Trucks and Machines

_____Real Animals

_____Pioneers

_____How to Make Things

_____Prehistoric Animals

_____Famous People

_____Jobs People Do

_____Imaginary People

_____Romance

_____Pets

_____Medicine

_____Inventions and Discoveries

_____Explorers

_____Family Problems

_____Magicians and Fairies

_____Exploring the Sea

_____People in Other Lands

_____Cowboys and Indians

_____History

_____Homemaking

_____Places in America

_____Science Fiction

_____Transportation

_____Holidays

_____Manners and Growing Up

_____Homelife

_____Nature